

# Mono County Local Transportation Commission

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## MINUTES

August 12, 2013  
(Adopted September 9, 2013)

**COUNTY COMMISSIONERS:** Tim Fesko, Larry Johnston, Fred Stump

**TOWN COMMISSIONERS:** Jo Bacon, Sandy Hogan, Matthew Lehman

**COUNTY STAFF:** Scott Burns, Gerry Le Francois, Mary Booher, Wendy Sugimura, Jeff Walters, Garrett Higerd, C.D. Ritter

**TOWN STAFF:** Peter Bernasconi, Jessica Morriss

**CALTRANS:** Forest Becket

**ESTA:** Jill Batchelder

**GUEST:** Kelly Garcia

1. **CALL TO ORDER & PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:** Chair Larry Johnston called the meeting to order at 9:06 a.m. and led the pledge of allegiance.
2. **PUBLIC COMMENT:** None.
3. **MINUTES:** July 8, 2013.

**MOTION:** Adopt minutes of July 8, 2013, as submitted. (Fesko/Hogan. Ayes: 5. Abstain due to absence: Lehman.)

4. **COMMISSIONER REPORTS:** Stump: Met **Jeff Walters** met with Garrett Higerd & USFS Federal Lands Access Program (FLAP) re Convict Lake Road; moving forward. Fesko: High Point along Topaz Lake completed, no controls. Biked Twin lakes Road, where three of four cyclists were nearly hit by cars. Shoulders and bike lanes needed.

5. **ADMINISTRATION**

**A. State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) fund:** Previous fund estimate of \$4.5 million is now up to \$6.1 million in fund shares. Staff needs to prioritize projects in Regional Transportation Improvement Program (RTIP) between now and November/December meeting. Past commissions put money aside for MOU projects, which has \$8.4 million as a share reserve. The 2014 STIP is \$6.1 million to program for current projects. Under former Transportation Enhancement (TE) program, no federal money to fund projects was carried forward. Local entities have to fund TE out of STIP shares if still eligible. No separate pot of money exists. Forest Becket indicated federal tax guidelines for Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) are out, but not State guidelines. The Planning Programming & Monitoring (PP&M) funds project study reports as part of RTIP, tracked through Overall Work Program (OWP). Mono did well, as past commissions were conservative on projects. Commissioner Bacon asked if Town TE funded gap closure between Mammoth Creek Park **and Meadow Lane**. Le Francois stated \$2 million+ may be needed from STIP.

**B. Olancha-Cartago Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) funding request:** Gerry Le Francois indicated Inyo requested partner funding of Olancha-Cartago from Mono. Tioga Pass is listed, but not eligible for State funds. The 40/40/10/10 percentage ratio is in effect (county of location, State, two other counties). Caltrans broke out funding request for other Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) projects on US 395/State Route (SR) 14 corridor. Kern Council of Governments (COG) did not have political support for that much money on SR 14; has other priorities. Kern does not have the money. Mono and Inyo gave 30% to keep Freeman Gulch moving forward. Could State fund that? *Not too promising.*

Forest Becket stated Caltrans headquarters fully supports MOUs. Kern to pay Olancho-Cartago? Becket noted good things going for Olancho. Kern committed to Centennial corridor (Bakersfield) because it has federal grant funding, and Olancho-Cartago. Keep existing reserve for Freeman Gulch 1 & 2? Le Francois indicated LTC needs to decide on local projects. Maybe a match is needed for Convict Lake Road and Airport Road. Put existing reserve toward Olancho-Cartago. Commissioner Johnston noted MOUs have been golden in many respects. Completing Olancho-Cartago would finish four-laning in Inyo-Mono. Becket stated Tom Hallenbeck appreciates MOU commitments, wants to help Mono projects. Johnston reminded that **local** projects **probably have undergone less** scrutiny by California Transportation Commission (CTC). Commissioner Hogan believed Mono benefits from all those projects.

**C. Final Local Transportation Fund (LTF) for 2012-13:** Mary Booher reviewed LTF fund estimates.

**D. Triennial performance audit 2009-a12:** Triennial audit was conducted by Fechter & Co. Staff met Caltrans's newer, higher standards. No issues.

**E. Regional Surface Transportation Program Federal Exchange revenue:** A sum of \$9,408 available for road maintenance is to be split between Town of Mammoth Lakes and Mono County. Forest Becket noted an unspent balance from previous fiscal year.

**MOTION:** Approve and authorize chair's signature on the 2012-13 Optional Regional Surface Transportation Program Federal Exchange; and allocate revenue equally between the Town of Mammoth Lakes and Mono County. (Hogan/Stump. Ayes: 6-0.)

Commissioners stood to honor Mary Booher while Chair Johnston read aloud a certificate of appreciation, followed by applause. Scott Burns noted staff had struggled with audits before Booher. New Finance Director Leslie Chapman knows LTC functions and will find staff to replace Booher.

**F. Commissioners' LTC priorities:** Wendy Sugimura will contact remaining commissioners for their priorities, list items in numerical sequence when complete, and present entire package next meeting. Suggestions: 1) create separate section for single-agency items; 2) acknowledge work already done; 3) segment new projects into smaller parts; 4) clarify Airport Road reconstruction; 5) add undergrounded utilities and sidewalk from Viewpoint Road in Mammoth; and 6) tag Tioga Pass Heritage Highway for Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) (see Glacier National Park infrastructure of tourism, highway accessibility, safety, rockfall, etc.), LTC would program, Caltrans would do heavy load.

Sugimura noted stronger policies in new Mono Basin Community Plan will be approved in General Plan update. Add word "expanded," with slightly different focus. Take out "Main Street" wording? *Falls under existing policy, new projects.*

Staff's challenge is to show projects funded while being driven by funding source guidelines. Forest Becket noted projects already programmed (like Transportation Enhancement [TE]); money was spent; and feds have 10-year payback clause. Talk more about funding sources. Our LTC tends to have old TE programs, may need to make some choices. Federal Lands Access Program (FLAP) is another option. Higerd explained FLAP funding applies to County-owned, -maintained facilities.

## 6. TRANSIT

**A. Eastern Sierra Transit Authority (ESTA):** Jill Batchelder cited 96% increase due to ski area routes. Reduction of evening trolley service lowered ridership. Aside from ski area routes, passenger trips/hour increased. Eight is good, and ESTA transported 25 passengers/hour. Benton/Bishop route was down; June shuttle ran holidays and weekends with productivity up; Mammoth Express route was lower, transitioned into 395 route and vanpool.

Commissioner Lehman noted missing trolley signage; Batchelder indicated sign was repaired. Lehman mentioned long lines to Postpile. "Trippers" (four/day) are extra standby buses to reduce lines. Staff is ready to get there in five minutes. Commissioner Hogan noted carrying capacity of valley is huge, but getting out is problem. Commissioner Bacon suggested express buses to Postpile. Limited services are available in valley, and too much traffic would restrict access for emergency.

Batchelder cited farebox as another indicator. Fares are free in Mammoth Lakes, but average hourly cost across system separates out routes for route-specific cost and farebox. All exceed 10% State requirement except one. Commissioner Johnston noted Mammoth Mountain Ski Area (MMSA) contributes \$1 million to

system. Batchelder noted Reds shuttle is totally fare based. Johnston questioned freebie rides for national park passes, and Hogan mentioned long-ago dream of eliminating child fares. Bacon noted ESTA implements contract with USFS, whereas YARTS operates under a Joint Powers Authority (JPA). Hogan commended ESTA for such professional service and management in only six years and knowing transition of clientele. She **was thought ESTA should be** very proud, as the area had nothing when Greyhound discontinued service.

**Yosemite Area Regional Transportation System (YARTS):** Scott Burns noted YARTS met in Mammoth, reporting 2012-13 ridership stats up >23%. Advisory committee met separately, with Danna Stroud as chair who meets with west side. Tuolumne had second year of increase: 49%. Mono was up 12%. Fresno still is considering, maybe summer 2015. Progress with Oakhurst: 80% support. Commissioner Stump thought if Fresno jointed, Madera would be right in middle.

## 7. CALTRANS

**A. Activities in Mono County and pertinent statewide information:** No items. Commissioner Stump cited a gap in Digital 395 between Crowley Lake dam and US 395 that would isolate all northern facilities from Bishop. Letter of support for Public Utilities Commission (PUC) resolution for additional funding? Sample letter from Mono. Forest Becket heard about funding issue. Stump identified it as a USFS issue, not Caltrans. Grindings on US Highway 6? Becket will ask about disposal of grindings for Hunter Avenue, a County road. Higerd clarified that Hunter is part County road, part private.

## 8. QUARTERLY REPORTS

**A. Town of Mammoth Lakes:** Peter Bernasconi reviewed projects and noted omission of transit yard upgrades.

**B. Mono County:** Garrett Higerd met with Federal Highway Administration (FHWA consultant last week, scoping kickoff for Convict Lake Road as a Federal Lands Access Program (FLAP) project, which requires 11.4% match. Topics discussed ranged from environmental to technical pavement condition and road widths for bike climbing lane. Original cost estimate of \$2.7 million was low, unsure of updated costs after scoping. Timber walls that allow more parking need evaluation. Mono Supervisors were concerned about timing of match; tapered match would meet needs best. Show commitment to funding in a year that could be different from year of construction. Expedite construction schedule, leverage additional funds. Scoping documents were submitted for final programming. Final decisions in early October. Compiling data of whole road system conditions and location. High priority for political and usage reasons.

Lots of work has been done in Lee Vining and Bridgeport. Asset management system will give flexibility to pulverizing and reconstructing everything. All GIS-based, one benefit of new system dealing with mailboxes, signs, culverts, etc. Commissioner Stump noted everything in Lee Vining and Bridgeport looks great, and Commissioner Fesko commended Higerd for resolving problems with local businesses. Higerd noted additional paving in Bridgeport in October. Commissioner Hogan thought back-in parking is working, but signage at entrances to town is needed. Jeff Walters indicated "back-in only" will be stenciled on curbs. Water leak along Bryant Street: Higerd is working with Public Utility District to schedule water-line replacement work. Bridgeport system is in rough shape, aging, hurting in many ways. Commissioner Fesko wanted no specified lanes on School Street – let people park how they want.

Mary Booher observed almost all back-in parking July 4, but yesterday Commissioner Johnston observed more than half parked wrong way across street. Process for evaluation of this project? RPAC is in favor, but if it's a failure... Forest Becket indicated Caltrans is aware of continuing issues with parking, noting complaints from visitors. Evaluation will be held this fall. Terry Erlwain was lead impetus, and Becket was unsure where momentum is. Fesko favored better education – one season without proper signage is not enough.

**C. Caltrans:** No report, as Forest Becket had just returned from vacation.

## 9. INFORMATIONAL

**A. Changeable Message Sign (CMS) on SR 203** (requested by Chair Johnston): Chair Johnston expressed disappointment that a unanimous LTC request was disregarded. He opposed aesthetics and location. Commissioners Bacon and Lehman were the dissenting votes on Town Council's 3-2 approval. Johnston asked, "How could that override LTC?" Bacon recalled that Caltrans said final authority would be Town Council.

How do people get back into town if road closes? Forest Becket stated primary intent is 395 conditions. Better location? Closer to 395. Commissioner Stump understood intent, but practically speaking, thought a way to get people back into town was needed. Becket cited rare closures. It's up to CHP and teams on ground to orchestrate. No delineation exists when there's that much snow. Johnston noted unanimous recommendation from LTC was ignored and 3-2 split in separate agency that doesn't have authority of LTC. Becket indicated not so much jurisdictional, as Caltrans thought community wanted a CMS. Johnston noted that five of six commissioners represent the Town.

**B. Electric car-charging comment letter:** Commissioner Lehman would like to see Mono County on leading edge of this particular change. Commissioner Bacon suggested Tesla locations for Bridgeport and Mammoth Lakes, and Lehman mentioned visitor center site. Bacon clarified that electric cars are \$80,000, not \$150,000. Commissioner Hogan thought WiFi hotspots along road would be forward-looking, too. Forest Becket indicated private industry is way ahead of government. Get Caltrans charging stations. Tesla has stations on west side of Sierra. Need one in Mono, one in Inyo. Bacon noted charging takes only 30-45 minutes. Lehman mentioned that Tesla stock went from \$30/share to \$150. Commissioner Johnston thought charging stations should be located in public places or existing gas stations. Bacon suggested looking for private property. Add this item to a future agenda.

10. **UPCOMING AGENDA ITEMS:** 1) RTIP; 2) LTC priority list; 3) strategic plan; 4) field trip to Montana; 5) Convict Lake road update; 6) Caltrans quarterly; 7) entry signage into state on US 6 (welcome to CA sign not there), Mono County entry sign; 8) missing Benton Crossing road bike route signs (pushed over, broken off by opponents), explore multi-modal signs (car, bike, pedestrian), replace some signage. Signs failed wind test, too.
11. **ADJOURN** at 11:17 a.m. to September 9, 2013.

*Prepared by C.D. Ritter, commission secretary*